

10 March 1964

VINSON SUBCOMMITTEE BRIEFING

MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN CUBA

I. There has been little change in the status of Soviet forces in Cuba since the beginning of this year.

A. Four to seven thousand Soviet military personnel remain on the island, most of them advisers, technicians, and instructors. We expect this number to remain fairly constant until the Cubans complete their training with surface-to-air missiles in April. At that time there will probably be further withdrawals of Soviet personnel.

B. We believe that all Soviet weapons now in Cuba have been transferred to Cuban control, except for the surface-to-air missiles.

II. The Soviets are still shipping supplies and equipment but we believe the shipments are primarily for maintenance and re-supply. There have been no such shipments to Cuba this year, and no such shipments since the October 1962 missile crisis. One Russian ship carried 12 MIG jet fighters as deck cargo. These aircraft may be trainers, or replacements for aircraft lost during the past two years.

In addition, three subchasers have been delivered since mid-December, to bolster Cuban defenses against coastal raiders.

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III. Cubans began six months of operational SAM training in November. The evidence to date suggests that the Soviets do intend to transfer the SAM system to Cuban control, possibly in late April or early May.

- A. The original SAM guidance radars have been replaced with older equipment.
- B. The air defense system has been reorganized to match the three-sector structure of the Cuban army and navy.
- C. Complete Cuban units now are training at all 24 SAM sites on the island.
 - 1. We first detected Cubans engaged in a target tracking exercise at a SAM site on January 23. Since mid-February this has been observed almost every day.
 - 2. Cubans have already assumed control of several early-warning radar sites.
- D. At the same time, Soviet participation in the air defense system has been declining steadily.
 - 1. Soviet SAM tracking activity and broadcast schedules for air surveillance have been sharply reduced.
 - 2. Early last month, Soviet radio-printer scrambler was apparently removed from air defense communications facilities.
 - 3. Even more significantly, the chatter of Soviet radio operators has contained increasingly

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4. We also have indications that a number of Soviet ships are scheduled to carry passengers from Cuba to the USSR in April, May and June.
- E. This evidence, and the precedent of transferring other Soviet weapons to the Cubans, suggests that The Soviets will turn the operation and control of the SAM system over to the Cubans when the present training program is completed.

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CUBAN POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

- I. Recent public statements by Fidel Castro and other high-level officials apparently have been designed to try to effect a minimization of frictions with the US--on Cuban terms, however.
 - A. Castro continues to stress that Cuba is not pressing for an immediate return of the Guantanamo Bay naval base. He says that "at the right moment" Cuba will appeal to an international organization--apparently the UN or World Court--to recover the base. An 8 March propaganda broadcast by Havana radio was aimed at building up Havana's legal case against the base in the expectation of presenting it some day before an international forum.
 - B. Castro has made no concessions, however, and continues to reiterate his "5 points", which were initially raised during the October 1962 missile crisis.
 - C. Castro appears to be preoccupied with internal economic considerations such as the sugar harvest, which is now under way.
- II. There is considerable optimism in Cuban official circles over the prospects for economic improvement resulting from increased trade with Free World countries. Another

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important factor in Havana's optimism is the recently-concluded USSR-Cuban sugar agreement.

A. Cuban officials boast that recent commercial deals concluded with Western countries have "broken the back" of the US economic denial effort.

1. Since the 7 January announcement of the purchase of busses from the British Leyland Motors Company, Cuban trade delegations have made repeated trips to West European capitals to negotiate for a wide variety of goods.
2. In addition, Cuba's accumulation of some \$100 million in convertible foreign exchanges during 1963 has made it a much more attractive market for non-bloc countries.

B. The USSR-Cuban sugar agreement is planned to guarantee Cuba a reasonable price for half its presumed 1970 crop of 10 million tons. Cuba will have to triple its 1963 sugar production by that date, however, to get the full economic benefit of this agreement.

1. Under the terms of the agreement Cuba is guaranteed 6 cents per pound of sugar for half its crop by the Soviet Union, and would be free to sell the remainder to the rest of the world at the prevailing world price.

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2. By the time the agreement becomes fully operative--if Cuba can meet its production goal--the world sugar price may well be below 6 cents per pound and considerably below the 10 cents per pound average for the first two months of 1964.

III. **Public morale** is low in Cuba, with much passive resentment against the regime. A general feeling of pessimism and apathy prevails among the people in Havana, according to reliable clandestine reports. While probably no more than 15 percent of the population enthusiastically support the regime, the remainder see little chance for an early change in political and economic conditions in the country.

IV. Cuba has supplied a good deal of organizational direction and financial backing for the Latin American Youth Congress which is now meeting in Santiago, Chile.

- A. Plans for this conference were finalized during 25-29 January meetings in Havana attended by eight Latin American Communist youth organizations.
- B. The meeting's organizers claim it will attract some 500 Latin American delegates; it will serve as a forum for the widespread dissemination of pro-Castro, anti-American propaganda throughout the hemisphere.

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- A. Brazil and Mexico are continuing their efforts to prevent the OAS from taking strong action against Cuba. Chile, Uruguay, and perhaps Bolivia also will be reluctant to back strong sanctions.
 - B. It seems unlikely that early OAS action on Caracas' charges will be forthcoming, or that when the Meeting of Foreign Ministers is held that strong economic or diplomatic sanctions will be invoked against Cuba.